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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: COURTESY CALL BY AMBASSADOR WITH ADVISER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, RURAL DEVELOPMENT & COOPERATIVES, AND LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

REF: A. DHAKA 173

- [1](#)B. DHAKA 157
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[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Adviser for Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives, and Labor and Employment looks forward to continued donor support for development, described his efforts to curb corruption, and affirmed the government's commitment to holding elections as soon as possible. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On February 1, the Ambassador paid a courtesy call on Mohammed Anwarul Iqbal, Adviser for Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives, and Labor and Employment. USAID Mission Director accompanied as note taker.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Ambassador noted that much of the peak development implementation period has passed with little to show, and that implementation would need to be accelerated to achieve a credible result by the end of the year. Iqbal confirmed the advisers have been told to move as quickly as possible on implementation. In response, he said, he has, for example, told his departments to pursue with village councils sanitation facilities for every household under their jurisdiction to improve personal hygiene and to promote economic activity via latrine construction.

[1](#)4. (C) The Ambassador stated that the international community and many Bangladeshis are concerned by custodial deaths occurring during the government's mass crackdown on alleged criminal elements. Iqbal replied that the government knows the joint forces making the detentions have gone overboard in some cases, but said that some detainees have already been released and more will be released soon.

[1](#)5. (SBU) The Ambassador praised the USG's productive relationship with the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives, and observed that USAID is drafting a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize the relationship. Iqbal affirmed his commitment to maintaining the partnership. Asked about the impact of the State of Emergency on USG-funded activities like seminars and training sessions, Iqbal said that indoor events are unaffected since the Emergency bans only outdoor public gatherings.

[1](#)6. (SBU) Citing the Chief Adviser's statements on addressing corruption, the Ambassador asked Iqbal how he is dealing with this issue in his ministries. Iqbal replied that he cancelled approval of all projects or activities given in the last month of the former government, and that

his staff are strictly reviewing each program on its merits, especially those involving infrastructure contracts.

17. (SBU) On elections, Iqbal reiterated the government's commitment to hold free, fair, and credible elections as soon as possible, and acknowledged that reconstituting the Election Commission is a vital first step in this process.
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